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THE VENEZUELA AFFAIR AND THE MONROE DOCTRINE.

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IT is possible, if not probable, that the unavowed purpose of the British, German, and Italian Governments in their undertaking to enforce certain claims against Venezuela by acts of war, was to ascertain whether the American people would uphold the definition of the Monroe Doctrine set forth by President Roosevelt in his last Annual Message. That is to say, would they uphold the principle that a European Government has the right, not only to inflict exemplary damages on an American republic for insults to its flag or to its official representatives, or for wrongs perpetrated on its subjects, but also to resort to the same process of violent coercion for the collection of ordinary debts,—by which are meant debts that are the outcome of absolute freedom of contract—and to confiscate for the payment thereof the customs revenue of an American republic for an indefinite period? That is the fundamental and momentous question upon which the outcome of the Venezuela imbroglio will be likely to throw some light. It is well understood in the British and German Foreign Offices that a definition of the Monroe Doctrine formulated by our Chief Magistrate does not bind the United States until it has been ratified by both Houses of Congress, and that no such ratification

will be made without the distinct approval of the American people. No such approval will be given until the consequences of the new definition shall have been carefully weighed and compared with the text of the declaration put forth in 1823 by President Monroe. In order to further the attainment of clear ideas upon the subject, we shall here point out the purport of the new definition, consider it in all its bearings, and then inquire how far it may be reconciled, in letter and in spirit, with the original Monroe Doctrine. If the two declarations prove irreconcilable, it will be for the American people and their representatives in Congress to determine by which they will abide.

I.

By way of preface, we should first mark what it is that the British, German, and Italian Governments have essayed to do in Venezuela. There has been a good deal of vagueness, not to say dissimulation, in their official utterances on the subject. A spokesman of the British Cabinet declared in the House of Commons that, so far as Great Britain was concerned, the Anglo-German-Italian demonstration against Venezuela was not a debt-collecting, but a punitory, or, rather, reparation-claiming, expedition. Its purpose, he said, was not to enforce the payment of ordinary debts, but to exact redress, hitherto refused, for *wrongs* which British subjects had suffered at the hands of that South-American republic. A similar declaration was made in the Reichstag by Chancellor von Bülow. The facts show, however, that, under the pretext of exacting reparation for wrongs, a secondary, if not the principal, aim of the joint expedition is the enforcement of payment of ordinary debts due from the Government or citizens of Venezuela to British, German, and Italian creditors. If the Governments that have resorted to coercion intended to exclude ordinary debts, they would either name specific sums that would be accepted as damages for wrongs alleged to have been suffered, or they would agree with Venezuela's representative upon some method of determining what would be a reasonable pecuniary indemnity. What they have insisted on, however, is a guarantee for the payment, not only of the damages, to be ascertained hereafter, for wrongs shown to have been committed, but also of ordinary debts due to British, German, and Italian creditors, the precise amount of which debts is to be fixed by a recourse to mixed

commissions. They demand that thirty per cent. of the customs duties levied at La Guayra and Puerto Cabello shall be paid for an indefinite period to representatives of Great Britain, Germany, and Italy, who shall have the right to supervise and audit the collection of the said duties, and to receive their respective proportions of the percentage named. If to damages for wrongs be added ordinary debts due from Government or citizens of Venezuela to subjects of Great Britain, Germany, and Italy, and if the aggregate be swollen by the cost of the blockade and of maintaining auditors at the custom-houses mentioned, it is certain that the customs revenue of Venezuela will, to the extent named, be mortgaged to the three allied European Powers for many years.

It is, however, the ultimate consequences of the principle sought to be established, rather than those of its initial application, to which attention should be directed. If thirty per cent. of the customs levied at certain Venezuelan seaports can be sequestrated for the payment of ordinary debts, it follows that the *whole* customs revenue of another South-American republic may be confiscated, if such wholesale confiscation be needed to provide interest and a sinking fund on the debts due to European creditors. In the case of Argentina, for example, the whole customs revenue of that federal republic might be needed to provide interest and a sinking fund for the payment of the colossal indebtedness incurred by its federal and provincial governments, and by its citizens, to British creditors. So long, indeed, as an efficient and an economical administration exists at Buenos Ayres, the pecuniary obligations of Argentina will no doubt be met. Should the Argentine Confederation, however, again become, what it has often been in the past, the theatre of revolution and of anarchy, a default in interest and sinking-fund payments would inevitably occur, and the principle which the allied Powers are now attempting to establish in the case of Venezuela would then be applied on an enormous scale to the Argentine Confederation. There is not, indeed, a single Latin-American republic, with the possible exception of Chile, the customs revenue of which would not, soon or late, be exposed to confiscation, if the American people at this time acquiesce in the assertion of the principle that European Powers are at liberty to collect by force ordinary debts from the commonwealths of Central and of South America.

II.

To what extent, if any, have the United States acquiesced in the principle of international law that ordinary debts may be collected by force from Latin-American republics? The American people have never had their attention called to the subject, and it remains to be seen what judgment they will pronounce upon it. It has been alleged, indeed, that, on two occasions, antedating the accession of Mr. Roosevelt to the Presidency, the American Executive had shown itself disposed to accept the principle. The occasions to which we refer were the joint expedition of Great Britain, Spain, and France against Mexico in 1861, which resulted in the occupation of Vera Cruz; and the seizure of Corinto, a seaport of Nicaragua, by Great Britain in 1885. The facts in both cases, when closely scrutinized, show that our State Department did not then acknowledge that ordinary debts could be collected by acts of war, but simply that *grievances* might be thus redressed, and reparation for *wrongs* be thus exacted.

Let us recall what actually occurred. In October, 1861, the British, Spanish, and French Governments signed a convention at London by which they agreed to demand of Mexico the payment of certain claims, and, if payment were refused, to take possession of Mexican ports and sequestrate the customs for the liquidation of those claims. What were those claims? Were they for ordinary debts, or were they for the reparation due for public wrongs?

The claim of England was based principally on the fact that on November 16, 1860, a party of armed men, obeying the orders of Miramon, then the *de facto* President of Mexico, broke into the house of the British Legation, and, against the protest of the Spanish Minister who happened to be present, and in defiance of the British flag and the seals of the office, rifled the safes of £152,000 belonging to English bondholders, deposited there for safe-keeping. Evidently, it was a national grievance, a public wrong, of which England complained. The complaint of Spain was based upon the fact that in September, 1859, the *de facto* Government of Mexico had concluded a treaty with Spain which recognized the validity of certain claims. Upon the triumph of the Juarez Government, the treaty was repudiated. This was Spain's principal ground of complaint, although she also declared herself aggrieved at the summary dismissal by Juarez of Señor Pacheco, the Spanish Minister. Here, again, we see that no col-

lection of ordinary debts was contemplated: it was reparation for a national grievance, for a public wrong, that was demanded.

The claim of France was more complicated. Primarily, that Power sought redress for certain wrongs alleged to have been committed by Mexico up to the year 1861. She also proposed, however, to enforce payment of the full face value ($15,000,000) of the iniquitous Jecker bonds, for which the comparatively paltry sum of $750,000 had been paid. Neither England nor Spain ever countenanced the collection of this fraudulent debt, and, when they found that Napoleon III. intended to press it, and also harbored designs of conquest, they recalled their war vessels from Mexican waters, and left Vera Cruz in the exclusive possession of France. The correspondence of our State Department with relation to this subject up to the time when the intentions of Napoleon III. were disclosed, was based on the assumption that the aim of the three allied Powers was not the collection of ordinary debts, whether just or fraudulent, but the redress of *grievances*. Thus Mr. Cass, Secretary of State, wrote to Mr. McLane, our Minister in London, on September 20, 1860:

"We do not deny the right of any other Power to carry on hostile operations against Mexico for the *redress of its grievances*. . . . I have already referred to the extent of the principle of foreign interference which we maintained with regard to Mexico. It is proper to add that, while that principle denies the right of any Power to hold permanent possession of any part of that country, or to endeavor by force to direct or control its political destiny, it does not call in question its right to carry on hostile operations against that Republic for *the redress of any real grievances it may have suffered.*"

We observe, next, that, while declining the invitation extended in 1861 by the three allies that the United States should become a party to the London Convention, Mr. Seward said:

"The President does not feel himself at liberty to question, and he does not question, that the sovereigns represented have an undoubted right to decide for themselves the fact whether they had sustained *grievances*, and to resort to war with Mexico for the *redress* thereof."

It is well known that, after the duplicity of Napoleon III. had been exposed, and after the withdrawal of his British and Spanish allies had taken place, no effective opposition to the French Emperor's designs could be offered by our Government, then absorbed in the prosecution of the war for the Union. There is not an

atom of evidence, however, that our State Department at any time sanctioned the forcible collection of the Jecker claim, any more than it sanctioned the conquest of Mexico and the erection of an empire therein.

We turn to the Corinto case, which, it has been hastily assumed by those not alive to the distinction between grievances or wrongs and ordinary debts, affords a precedent for the acquiescence of our Government in the forcible collection of the latter class of obligations. Here, again, let us review the facts. In the early part of 1885, the British Government was moved to indignation by the arrest and forcible detention by Nicaraguan authorities of Mr. Hatch, the acting British consul, and certain other British subjects in the Mosquito Reservation. To these men a trial was denied, and they were summarily expelled from Nicaraguan territory. Nicaragua alleged that they had instigated riots against her sovereignty in the Mosquito Reservation, but she failed to give the prisoners a hearing before a court of justice. The British Government forthwith presented a claim for $75,000, by way of reparation for the wrong inflicted on British subjects, and, receiving no satisfactory promise of payment from the Nicaraguan authorities, sent a war vessel to the port of Corinto to enforce the demand. Thereupon Nicaragua appealed to the United States; but Mr. Gresham, then Secretary of State, declined to interpose or mediate, and declared that Nicaragua must deal directly with Great Britain. In a telegram, however, of April 24, 1885, addressed to Mr. Bayard, he said:

"The President advises that you say unofficially and confidentially to Lord Kimberley, that, while disclaiming any right to interfere in the pending settlement of the claim for pecuniary *reparation*, compliance with Nicaragua's request for an extension of time of payment would avoid embarrassment to the commerce of this and other countries and be very satisfactory to the United States."

This suggestion was accepted by Lord Kimberley, and the claim was soon after settled. Commenting upon this incident in his Annual Message sent to Congress in December, 1885, President Cleveland said:

"While the sovereignty and jurisdiction of Nicaragua were in no way questioned by Great Britain, the former's *arbitrary conduct in regard to British subjects* furnished the ground for this proceeding."

III.

Such had been the consistent position of the United States Executive up to December, 1902, with reference to the momentous question whether ordinary debts due, or alleged to be due, from the governments or citizens of Latin-American republics to the subjects of European Powers may be collected by acts of war. Neither explicitly nor by implication had our State Department ever answered the question in the affirmative. It is true, on the other hand, that no negative answer had been given; but that proves nothing, because, with the exception of the pressing of the infamous Jecker claim by France, which was veiled behind a demand for a redress of grievances, and which had ultimately to be renounced, no attempt to enforce the payment of ordinary debts by acts of war directed against a Latin-American republic had been made by any European Government: the seizure of the Chincha Islands by Spain in 1864 was justified by Peru's refusal to grant reparation for the *wrongs* suffered by Spanish residents in the last-named country. Even in Mr. Roosevelt's first Annual Message, sent to Congress in December, 1901, there is no distinct intimation of an opinion that ordinary debts should be placed by us on the same footing as grievances or wrongs, so far as the enforcement of payment by acts of war might be concerned. Mr. Roosevelt said then:

"We do not guarantee any State against punishment if it *misconducts* itself, provided that punishment does not take the form of the acquisition of territory by any non-American Power."

By the word "misconduct," the President would naturally be supposed to contemplate the perpetration of what are technically known as "wrongs." According to the usage of international or municipal law, the word would not be properly applicable to an omission to pay ordinary debts. Only in his second Annual Message did Mr. Roosevelt allow himself to use an elastic and ambiguous phrase, which might be presumed to cover ordinary debts as well as grievances or torts. He said:

"No independent nation in America need have the slightest fear of aggression from the United States. It behooves each one to maintain order within its own borders, *and to discharge its just obligations to foreigners.*"

It will be observed that Mr. Roosevelt does not explain how the justness of obligations is to be proved. Must the obligations

be recognized by the courts of the debtor country; or by an international tribunal; or shall the alleged creditor be judge in his own case? Let us take the most charitable view of Mr. Roosevelt's meaning, and assume that, if he intended the phrase to cover ordinary debts as well as wrongs, what he had in mind was obligations the validity of which had been admitted either by treaty or by the courts of the debtor country. It makes all the difference in the world, first, whether the recognized obligations were for sums of money acknowledged to be due by way of reparation for *wrongs,* or whether they were ordinary debts; and, secondly, whether the recognition was embodied in a treaty or in a decision of a court of the debtor country. If the obligation were of the nature of a penalty incurred for an international tort, we could not dispute the right of the aggrieved nation to exact the penalty by acts of war. The penalty, indeed, may be exacted whether or not the commission of the offence is acknowledged by the offending party, provided, of course, the charge be not notoriously trumped up, and put forward as a mere pretext for aggression. Even an ordinary debt, if a promise to pay it is incorporated in a treaty, may furnish a *casus belli,* for the repudiation of a treaty is a cause for war.

The pivotal question is presented by ordinary debts the validity of which has been certified by the courts of the debtor country, but which the debtor has failed to pay. Did or did not Mr. Roosevelt mean to say by the words (*"just obligations"*) which we have quoted from his second Annual Message, that debts of the kind last mentioned are collectable by acts of war? Apparently, that is what the British, German, and Italian Governments have undertaken to find out by their joint demonstration against Venezuela; or, rather, they have gone further, and propose to extort by coercion the payment even of those ordinary debts upon which no judgment has yet been obtained from Venezuelan courts. If, by a loose or inadvertent use of the phrase "just obligations," Mr. Roosevelt did not mean to assert that ordinary debts are collectable by acts of war, but only intended to say that such a process of coercion might be invoked for the enforcement of penalties or reparations for grievances or wrongs, he had but to make such an explanation of his ambiguous language from the outset of the Anglo-German-Italian demonstration, and the Venezuela incident would doubtless have been quickly closed. The allied Powers

would simply have needed to specify the grievances or wrongs of which they complained, and to indicate the sums of money which, in their opinion, would constitute a fair reparation. If the amounts named seemed reasonable to our State Department, it would have played the part of a friend by counselling the Caracas Government to pay them: if they seemed grossly unreasonable, a suggestion that they be referred to arbitration would, doubtless, have been accepted by all parties.

Here we may observe that a part of the French claims have been liquidated and embodied in a treaty. From the moment that Venezuela failed to comply with the terms of the payment agreed upon in that document, France unquestionably had a *casus belli* against that republic, for such a repudiation of treaty rights is a ground for war. Far from availing herself, however, of this valid excuse for co-operating in the Anglo-German-Italian demonstration, France has refrained from putting any violent coercion on her debtor, and has confined herself to asserting that, if any sequestration of Venezuelan customs is to take place, the disputed claims which England, Germany and Italy have sought to enforce by acts of war ought not to take precedence of French claims previously recognized by treaty. If the preference to which France objects should be conceded, it would, obviously, put a premium on war and a discount on pacific negotiations. That is not a state of things desired by enlightened nations.

Mr. Roosevelt has not yet seen fit to explain that he did not include ordinary debts in the "just obligations" which, as he said in his second Annual Message, were collectable by any acts of war that should stop short of the permanent occupation of the debtor's territory. We hope that such an explanation will yet be forthcoming from him, and we are pretty sure that the American people will demand it when they are thoroughly awakened to the danger of allowing European Powers to exact from Latin-American republics the payment of ordinary debts by a "temporary," or "provisional" occupation of seaports, or by the confiscation of customs duties for an indefinite period. We have put the words "temporary" and "provisional" in quotation marks, because those were the soothing phrases applied to the occupation of Egypt by Great Britain. There is no longer any pretence that the promises implied in the adjectives quoted, and explicitly made by Mr. Gladstone on more than one occasion, will ever be per-

formed. Egypt still retains the semblance of an autonomous government, and not an inch of her soil has been formally annexed to the British Empire: nevertheless, her national revenues have passed into British hands, and, with them, the substance of her independence. May not the people of Egypt justly say to Great Britain: "You control my destiny, when you withhold from me the means of shaping it at my volition. You take my life, when you take the means whereby I live."

IV.

Now, let us see which of two principles is the more reconcilable with the spirit and the letter of the Monroe Doctrine as originally proclaimed; the principle, namely, that the payment of ordinary debts may be enforced by European Powers upon Latin-American republics through acts of war, or the principle that the maxim "*caveat emptor*"—let the purchaser or lender beware—is applicable to all business dealings between the subjects of European Powers and the Governments or citizens of American commonwealths. The official doctrine formulated by Monroe in his seventh Annual Message to Congress sets forth that, with the Latin-American Governments which had declared their independence and maintained it, and whose independence we had on great consideration and just principles acknowledged, "we could not view any interposition for the purpose of *oppressing them or controlling in any other manner their destiny* by any European Power in any other light than as the manifestation of an unfriendly disposition toward the United States." There is nothing here about the occupation, temporary or permanent, of American territory. Our objection to such occupation is a logical and an obvious deduction. What Monroe prohibited was any interference by European Powers with American republics for the purpose of *oppressing* them, or *controlling* in any other manner their *destiny*.

Now, when we bear in mind that the bulk, if not the whole, of the revenue required by Latin-American commonwealths for the support of their civil and military administration and for the development of their natural resources, is derived from customs duties, it is manifest that a confiscation of those duties might, and probably would, prove a death-blow. Deprived of the funds on which they had been accustomed to rely, the central and provincial governments would be disqualified for the maintenance

of order, and a relapse into anarchy would almost certainly ensue. Retaining a nominal independence and shielded from territorial dismemberment, the commonwealths, denuded of their customs revenue, would be mere tributaries of their foreign creditors, and they would soon come to recognize that their position was incomparably worse than that of Egypt, where a large part of the national income is expended by the British mortgagees on the development of the country. In the tragical predicament to which our indifference had consigned them, all clear-headed men in South-American republics would come to regard the Monroe Doctrine as a snare and a curse, and would say to its latest formulator what the Ten Tribes said to Rehoboam: "What part have we in David, or what inheritance in the son of Jesse?" They would infinitely prefer annexation to Great Britain over indefinite continuance in their poverty-stricken autonomy, and they would repudiate the notion that they should refrain from seeking such an amelioration of their lot out of regard to the private interests of the United States. We need not say that, if all or many of the Latin-American republics, enlightened and instigated by far-sighted and resolute citizens, should conceive a desire for annexation to the British, or, for that matter, the German, Empire, we should be powerless to resist the consummation of the wish. Nor could we, without frankly avowing that the purpose of the Monroe Doctrine is a purely selfish one, oppose a preference avowed by a majority of a Latin-American nation for the status of a British or German colony over that of merely ostensible independence.

Already it is perfectly clear to intelligent Peruvians that their country would be better off as a British colony than it is to-day, and, were the customs revenue of Peru to be sequestrated for the benefit of foreign creditors, the opinion would quickly be shared by the mass of the population. Order and prosperity have greater charms than anarchy and poverty, and, sooner or later, if we sanction the confiscation of their customs revenue for ordinary debts, many of the Latin-American commonwealths will be tempted to exchange a nominal and barren independence for the invigorating rule of a strong, opulent and progressive country like the United Kingdom. By such a move they would have much to gain; whereas, if the Monroe Doctrine is to be henceforth interpreted as sanctioning the confiscation of customs revenue for the payment of ordinary debts, they could only keep their nominal

autonomy by a sacrifice of the income which is indispensable to their well-being.

V.

Is it not clear, then, that the Monroe Doctrine, whether we construe it by the letter or the spirit, forbids us to tolerate the confiscation of the customs revenue of a Latin-American republic for any purpose except the redress of "grievances" and reparation for "wrongs," it being well understood that the meaning of the words quoted has never comprehended, in the eye of international law, the mere omission to pay ordinary debts. No attempt has ever been made to collect from a strong nation ordinary debts not tainted by *tort* and not acknowledged by a treaty. Of this fact we have had ample proof in the United States. Before the outbreak of our Civil War, the State of Mississippi and the State of Pennsylvania defaulted on their bonds. Considerable quantities of these securities were in the hands of British subjects, but not on that account did the British Government ever dream of extorting payment of the bonds by acts of war. Sydney Smith was one of the bondholders, but he had to pay himself with caustic epigrams coined at our expense. Other British owners of Mississippi and Pennsylvania securities had to content themselves with launching anathemas at all persons and things American. They would have liked, no doubt, to repudiate in their own case the application of the maxim "*caveat emptor*," but no such absurd position was taken by the British Government. When, however, the helpless Khedive of Egypt failed to provide the interest and sinking fund due on bonds held in France and England, the British and French Governments declined to regard their subjects as bound by the maxim "*caveat emptor*," and proceeded to place the Egyptian revenues in the hands of a receiver, the Board of Joint Control, which managed them for the benefit of foreign creditors. The American people have always assumed that the maxim named applies to foreign investors in government securities and in private speculative ventures, so far as our own country is concerned. We have not, indeed, explicitly recognized that our sister American republics are entitled to the benefit of the same maxim, but not for a moment have we supposed that European nations would attempt to follow the Egyptian precedent on this side of the Atlantic. Nor has there ever been, as we have seen, any trace of an official intimation on the part of our Executive

that such a course would be permitted by us until, in his second Annual Message, Mr. Roosevelt announced that European Powers might go to any lengths, short of the permanent occupation of territory, in enforcing the payment of "just obligations" on American republics. Whether the term "just obligations" covers ordinary debts is the very thing which the British-German-Italian alliance has undertaken to find out.

Thus far, not a word of protest has been heard from our State Department against the inclusion of ordinary debts in the claims which are to be guaranteed by the confiscation of a percentage of Venezuela's customs revenue. Apparently, the Roosevelt Administration imagines that it has performed its whole duty to our sister republics and to the United States when it is able to chronicle the assurance received from the Foreign Offices of London, Berlin and Rome, that the allied Powers had no intention of occupying Venezuelan territory. If the American people believe that thereby our State Department has exhausted its duty in the premises, we have written this article in vain. There should be no attempt, however, henceforward, to disguise the truth. Mr. Roosevelt should frankly acknowledge what he means by "just obligations," and face the consequences of the new definition which he has given to the Monroe Doctrine. If he deliberately intends to sanction the confiscation of a part of Venezuela's customs revenue for the payment of ordinary debts, he cannot hereafter refuse to authorize the confiscation of the whole of Argentina's for a similar purpose. Let him, then, confide the whole scope of his intentions to his countrymen without delay. He is not the man to palter and use words in a double sense, when the importance of an unambiguous deliverance is brought home to him. For many Latin-American republics there is no loophole of escape from the fate of Egypt, except through the rigorous application of the maxim "*caveat emptor*" to ordinary debts. If Mr. Roosevelt desires to deprive them of that loophole, let him say so boldly, and appeal to the verdict of his fellow-citizens.

We, personally, doubt whether President Roosevelt inserted the phrase "just obligations" in the second Annual Message from which we have quoted it. We believe that, if he did so, it was through inadvertence, and without a suspicion that the foreign creditors of Venezuela would endeavor so to construe the phrase

as to make it include, not only penalties and reparations for technical "wrongs," but also ordinary debts. We do not believe that, in any of the negotiations between our State Department and the Foreign Offices of London, Berlin and Rome, he has ever deliberately authorized such an interpretation of his words. We do not believe, in fine, that he intended a new definition of the Monroe Doctrine. If such, indeed, was his intent, he is a man too straightforward and unflinching to dissemble it or extenuate it. He will let his countrymen know whether he means, or does not mean, that henceforward, as in the past, the European creditors of the Governments or citizens of Latin-American republics must be governed by the maxim "*caveat emptor*," as regards the collection of ordinary debts.

VI.

We scarcely need say that Latin-Americans prefer the Monroe Doctrine, as originally formulated, to any new version of it that should authorize foreign creditors to sequestrate their customs duties for the payment of ordinary debts. They hold that they would be "oppressed," and that their "destiny" would be materially "controlled," if the customs revenue on which their Governments mainly rely for support could thus be confiscated. Most of them accept the theory propounded by Señor Calvo, that, so far as ordinary debts are concerned, foreign creditors, in the event of a default of payment, should be relegated for their remedy to the courts of the debtor country exclusively, and that an enforcement of payment should not be attempted by diplomatic pressure, much less by acts of war. They argue that, if such a rule as Señor Calvo advocates were made operative everywhere on this side of the Atlantic—it is already operative in the case of the United States, for nobody would try to coerce us—no serious loss would be experienced by foreign creditors. For two reasons. In the first place, foreigners would purchase bonds, or make other investments, in Latin-American countries with their eyes wide open to the risks of the speculation: in the second place, no Latin-American republic, alive to its own permanent interests, would impair its credit by repudiating for itself or for its citizens obligations which it acknowledged to be just, and which it could afford to pay. On the other hand, flagrant swindles, like the Jecker bonds, or the Weil and La Abra claims, would be exposed and denounced in the courts of the debtor country.

It is unquestionably true that, if President Roosevelt should determine that fidelity to the letter and spirit of the Monroe Doctrine would require him to protest against attempts on the part of European Powers to enforce by acts of war upon Latin-American commonwealths the payment of ordinary debts—that is to say, debts accruing, or alleged to have accrued, under absolute freedom of contract—he would feel it to be his duty, as a matter of decorum and consistency, to impose a similar rule upon our State Department. Unfortunately, it is undeniable that the power and influence of our Federal Executive have more than once been employed to extort from our sister American republics the payment, not only of ordinary debts acknowledged to be valid, but also of claims known from the outset to be questionable, and subsequently proved to be fraudulent. All honest Americans deplore the pressure that was at one time brought to bear by our State Department to compel Mexico to acknowledge and pay the notorious Weil and La Abra claims. There is reason to believe that claims, almost equally indefensible, against Hayti and Dominica have at times received diplomatic support from the United States. If we purpose to go into an international court on behalf of our Latin-American friends, and to demand the application of the maxim "*caveat emptor*," we must do so with clean hands. Our State Department must refrain, hereafter, from assisting our native creditors in the collection of ordinary debts from the Governments or citizens of Latin-American Commonwealths. In the case of Latin-American Republics, as in the case of Great Britain, France or Germany, American creditors must content themselves with an appeal to the courts of the debtor country, and then, with a clear conscience, we can insist that European creditors shall be relegated to the same remedy.

This is, as we have said, the logical, the practical and the equitable interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine, as it was originally formulated. It remains to be seen whether this construction will commend itself to the good sense, the foresight and the sympathies of the American people.

A JEFFERSONIAN DEMOCRAT.